

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK
RARE BIRD RECORDS
MARCH - MAY 2006

Attached is a list of observations reported by visitors and staff for the period March 1 - May 31. I've compiled only those observations for species which are listed as **Rare, Accidental, Hypothetical** or **Not included** (?) on the park's checklist. A "?spr" indicates a species which is documented for the park but not in the spring season.

Drought conditions prevailed throughout West Texas during the spring season with very high temperatures beginning in late March. March was extremely dry, with not one recording station receiving more than 0.15 inches. April improved only slightly, with Panther Junction receiving just over an inch. May brought a couple of good days with rain measuring from a quarter to nearly one inch. Precipitation totals year-to-date as compared to the same time period last year (+ or -) is as follows: Panther Junction; 2.17 " (-0.65"), Chisos Basin; 1.91" (-1.06"), Rio Grande Village; 0.70" (-1.55"), Castolon; 0.18" (-2.16"), and Persimmon Gap; 0.68" (-2.14").

The lack of rain during the spring resulted in a late-arriving migration front, but once it started moving, a good variety of species were reported. A fire early in the season in the Chisos Basin (March 9) had little impact on migrants, but two fires in Mexico's Sierra del Carmen range (one in early May, a second about two weeks later) may have created a flurry of late and unexpected species. Indeed, a total of seven review species were reported this spring, six of which could potentially be the fall-out from the combination of fires and drought in the mountains south of our border.

A pair of **ruddy ground-doves** were reported from Boquillas Canyon trail on May 31 (report pending from Seniawski), observed in the giant cane thickets next to the river. A report of a **greater pewee** in the high Chisos in early May was frustrating because no documentation was submitted by an otherwise experienced birder. In late May, a party of four experienced observers reported hearing two calling **dusky-capped flycatchers** in the high Chisos, but was unable to make any audio recordings. A documented report of a **red-faced warbler** on the lower Laguna Meadow Trail in late April was a good find, followed by an unusual report of the same species in the park service residence area at Panther Junction on May 16, right about the time of the second fire in the del Carmens. Perhaps the bird of the season was a beautifully photographed **slate-throated redstart** in Boot Canyon on May 2. As is typical with this species in Big Bend, it appears to have been a one-day wonder, in spite of the efforts of many experienced birders to relocate the bird. Finally, two **Baird's sparrows** were reported in the grassy fields around the Daniels Ranch picnic area at Rio Grande Village in early May, one report including excellent photographs.

The one review species that didn't have southerly connections was a late **varied thrush** photographed in atypical habitat in Cottonwood Campground on March 14. This lone male was likely a lingering individual from the minor invasion of varied thrushes this past winter.

Two species were added to the main park checklist this spring, one on the basis of a fortuitous meeting at Panther Junction in late April. In conversation about (what else) birds, Peter MacGregor revealed that he had photographs of a brown pelican observed in May, 2005 at Hot Springs. The digital images he sent, crystal clear shots of an immature brown pelican, elevate that species from the park's hypothetical list to the main list. The second addition to the list was a species not previously reported in the park.

On March 1, a first winter plumage Bonaparte's gull at Santa Elena Canyon was photo-documented, providing a first park record. The addition of these two species brings the main list to 407, with an additional 43 species still on the hypothetical list (and waiting for confirmation).

Other highlights for the spring: Blue-throated hummingbirds and hepatic tanagers occurring at lower than normal elevation, most likely in response to extremely dry conditions in their normal haunts. A lone least grebe that stayed faithful to the settling pond at Daniels Ranch for a week while the pond was used for irrigation. Colima warblers and painted redstarts were abundant and vocal in Boot Canyon, making for many satisfied birders. Late and unusual observations of hooded and Canada warblers were interesting reports and probably the result of fires on the east slopes of the del Carmens. A lone Couch's kingbird calling at Cottonwood campground in proximity to a calling tropical kingbird was an excellent exercise in ear-birding in late May. Finally, on a somewhat sour note, Eurasian collared doves were observed all over the park, and appear to have established breeding populations at Rio Grande Village. It was only a matter of time....

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<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>PARK STATUS</u>
Snow goose	1	3/26	Rio Grande Vill.	Shane Pruett	rare
	1	4/03	Rio Grande Vill.	Mark Flippo	rare
Gambel's quail	2	3/06	Dugout Wells	Mark Heerd	acc.
	1	5/18	Dagger Flat Rd	Carolyn Hoss	acc.
Wild turkey	1	3/02	North Rosillos	Greg Levandoski	rare
Least grebe	1	4/27	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Gavin Biober	?spr
	1	4/28	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Peg Abbott	?spr
	1	4/30 & 5/3	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Mark Flippo	?spr
	1	5/04	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Jason Leifester Kelly Holligan	?spr.
Brown pelican*	1imm	5/2005	Hot Springs	Peter MacGregor	hyp.
*Hypothetical for park. Photo documentation by MacGregor from May 2005. BRPE moves to main list.					
American bittern	1	3/09	RGV-Nature Trail	Peter Assmann	unc.
	1	3/27	RGV-Nature Trail	Sarah McGregor	unc.
	2	4/16	RGV-Nature Trail	Becky Peterson	unc.
Gray hawk *nesting pair	2*	3/29-5/31	Cottonwood Camp	Many observers	unc.
Common black-hawk	1-2	3/07	Rio Grande Vill.	Nancy Docherty	rare
	1-2	3/07-5/31	Rio Grande Vill.	Many observers	rare
* At same nest area used in 2005 season. Area near nest closed off to prevent unnecessary intrusion.					
Common Black-hawk	1	3/22	Panther Junction	Jody Davila	rare
Harris's hawk	1	3/19	Terlingua Creek	Mark Flippo	rare
Merlin	1	3/01	River Road East	Robert Hamilton	rare
Bonaparte's gull*	1	3/01	Santa Elena Cyn	Mark Flippo	?

***1st documented park record. Photos.**

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>PARK STATUS</u>
Eurasian Collared dove	1	3/03	RGV-Store	Mark Flippo	rare
	1	3/18	Cottonwood Camp.	Mark Lockwood	rare
	1	3/31	Rio Grande Vill.	Jeff Sartain	rare
	4	4/05	Rio Grande Vill.	Mark Flippo	rare
	1	4/09	Persimmon Gap	Doug Duncan	rare
	2	4/12-30	Panther Junction	Mark Flippo	rare
	2	4/30	RGV-Campground	Mark Flippo	rare
	1	5/15	Park Rte 12 MP 10	Mark Flippo	rare
Ruddy Ground-dove*	2	5/31	Boquillas Cyn Tr.	Charles Senaiwski	acc
*Texas Review Species: Report pending to TBRC:Lockwood. Pending review.					
Barn owl	1	4/09	Park Rte 12 MP 13	Dan Leavitt	rare
Flammulated owl	1	5/03	Window Trail	R.Dobos,D.Don, C.Edgecomb,T.Crooks	rare
	1	4/19	Boot Canyon	M.J. Wigginton	rare
Burrowing owl	1	3/28	Harte Ranch rd.	Garrett Noyes	rare
	1	4/08	Rte 11, MP15	Dan Leavitt	rare
Long-eared owl	1	4/07	Window Trail	A&H Hunter	rare
	1	5/05	Laguna Meadow Tr.	Kip Millar	rare
Magnificent Hummingbird	1m	5/28	Boot Canyon	Brian Gibbons	rare
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1m	4/28	Panther Junction	Rob & Angie Dean	rare
Green kingfisher	1m	4/11	RGV-Nature Trail	Pete Suffredini	rare
	1m	4/16	RGV-Nature Trail	Orrin Harvey	rare
	1m	4/28	RGV-Nature Trail	Meredith Taylor	rare
Tropical kingbird	1	4/27	RGV-Nature Trail	Jon L Dunn	rare*
*Rare in park outside of Cottonwood campground area, where uncommon.					
Couch's kingbird	1	5/20	Cottonwood Camp.	Mark Flippo	rare

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>PARK STATUS</u>
Black-capped Vireo	1m	4/27	Blue Creek Tr.	Jim McCaw	rare
	1m,	4/28	Basin Loop Tr.	Jim McCaw	rare
	1m	4/29	Window Trail	Jim McCaw	rare
	1m	5/01	Basin Road	John Vanderpoel	rare
	3m	5/07	Window Trail	Peg Abbott,Gina Nichol,R.Taylor	rare
	1m	5/17	Basin Road	Mark Flippo	rare
	1m	5/17	Green Gulch	Mark Flippo	rare
	4m	5/31	Window Trail	Brian Gibbons	rare
Yellow-throated Vireo	1	4/13	RGV-campground	W&E Harrington	rare
Cassin's vireo	1	5/12	Laguna Meadow Tr.	France Davis	rare
Horned lark	1m	4/01	Dugout Wells	Ray Goad	rare
Mountain bluebird	10	3/20	Laguna Meadow Tr.	Brandon Schmidt	rare
Varied Thrush*	1m	3/14	Cottonwood Camp.	Alec Dobson	?spr.
*Texas Review Species: report and photos to TBRC:Lockwood. Pending review.					
Sprague's pipit	1	3/02	Ernst Tinaja	J.S. Munzinger	acc.
	1	5/02	Panther Junction	Wendell Bradford	acc.
Lucy's warbler	1	3/30	Persimmon Gap	Jim Hines	*
*Rare outside of Cottonwood Campground area, where locally common.					
Tropical parula	1	3/02	Panther Junction	Rob & Angie Dean	acc.
Chestnut-sided Warbler	1m	5/19	Panther Junction	R&A Dean,M.Flippo	rare
Black-throated Gray warbler	1	3/27	RGV-group camp	Chris Merkord	rare
Yellow-throated Warbler	1	4/20	Hot Springs	Dennis Spriggs	rare
Grace's warbler	1	5/07	Colima Trail	Al Mercer	rare
Worm-eating warb.	1	4/20-23	Chisos Basin	Dennis Spriggs	rare

Ovenbird	1	5/15	Boot Canyon	Kit Larsen	rare
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Hooded warbler	1	4/17	RGV-store	???	rare
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	1m	5/28	Boot Canyon	Greg Cook	rare
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Canada warbler	1m	5/30	Cattail Falls	Brian Gibbons	acc.
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Red-faced warbler*	1	4/30	Laguna Meadow Tr.	John Vanderpoel	acc.
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	1	5/16	Panther Junction	Angie Dean	acc.
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***Texas review species: report to TBRC:Lockwood. Pending review.**

Painted redstart	1	3/17	Boot Canyon	Greg Levandoski	spo.
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	5	3/30	Boot Canyon	Chad Rittenhouse	spo.
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	6	4/22	Boot Canyon	Earl Horn	spo.
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	2	4/29	Boot Canyon	Mark Flippo	spo.
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	2	5/13	Colima trail	George Grier	spo.
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	2	5/28	Boot Springs	Brian Gibbons	spo.
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	1	5/30	Pine Canyon	Brian Gibbons	spo.
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Slate-throated

Redstart*	1	5/02	Boot Canyon	Jim & Lynne Weber	acc.
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***Texas Review Species: Report and photos to TBRC:Lockwood. Pending review.**

Baird's sparrow*	1	5/01	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Joe Shoemaker	rare
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	1	5/04	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Jason Leifester Kelly Holligan	rare
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***Texas Review Species: Leifester Report and photos to TBRC:Lockwood. Pending review.**

Fox sparrow	2	3/06	Rio Grande Vill.	Carolyn Ohl	rare
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Rose-breasted
Grosbeak

	1m	4/29	RGV-group camp.	David Elkowitz	rare
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	1m	4/30	RGV-group camp	Mark Flippo	rare
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	1m	5/16	RGV-store	George Grier	rare
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	1m	5/16	RGV-Daniels Ranch	George Grier	rare
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Lazuli bunting	1m	4/28	Cottonwood Camp.	Betsy Kirkpatrick	rare
	1m	4/29	RGV-Daniels Ranch	David Elkowitz	rare
	1m	5/12	Panther Junction	Angie Dean	rare
Common grackle	1m	3/29	Cottonwood Camp.	Mark Flippo	rare
	1m	4/28	Cottonwood Camp.	Mark Flippo	rare
Hooded oriole	1m	3/08	RGV-Nature Trail	Laura Southwick	rare
	1m	3/23	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Mark Flippo	rare
	1m	5/24	Panther Junction	Rob & Angie Dean	rare
Baltimore oriole	1m	5/02	Cottonwood Camp.	J.Leifester, K.Holligan	acc.
	1m	5/02	RGV-Nature Trail	Leifester,Holligan	acc.
	1m	5/07	Cottonwood Camp.	N. Martin	acc.

